



MECKLENBURG COUNTY

Health Department

March 14, 2013

Health Update

Public Health Process for Animal Bites/ Exposures

Appropriate management of animal bites and prevention of rabies is a high priority community health concern. Prevention of human rabies depends on prompt reporting of animal bite/scratch/saliva exposures by patients, investigation by Charlotte-Mecklenburg Animal Care and Control, post-exposure management recommendations by Public Health, and expedited treatment in Emergency Departments.

To assure the highest quality patient care and customer service, here is the step-by-step process that occurs when someone has an animal bite/scratch/saliva exposure in Mecklenburg County:

- When a patient suffers an animal bite, scratch or saliva exposure, contact the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Animal Care and Control (call 311) or fax the report to 704-336-5709.
- The animal control officer completes a bite report from information provided by the patient, family members, pet owners and police officers.
- The bite report is forwarded to Health Department Epidemiology Specialist Al Piercy (or designee), who interviews each person (and/or parents of children) to establish that an injury or exposure has occurred, and determines species of animal, rabies vaccination status of the animal involved, and risk of rabies in the animal. Mr. Piercy has over 30 years of experience, and utilizes the current guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), and the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians. If appropriate, he consults with Health Department physicians, the NC State Public Health Veterinarian, and officials at CDC in Atlanta.
- If applicable, the Health Department assesses uninsured patients for Medicaid eligibility, and if not Medicaid eligible, determines eligibility for replacement rabies vaccine and Rabies Immune Globulin (RIG) from the NC Division of Public Health. (Patients eligible for this program must receive services at CMC-Main).
- If it is determined that an exposure has occurred, the patient is referred to the emergency department with a post exposure treatment recommendation, which is the official recommendation from the Mecklenburg County Health Department. Post exposure treatment for rabies is not provided at the Health Department or at provider offices in Mecklenburg County.

If a patient presents to the emergency department without benefit of this process, we recommend that the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Animal Care and Control be promptly contacted to initiate the evaluation and treatment process. Please direct questions about the process to Stephen R. Keener MD MPH (704-336-4705), and technical questions regarding risk and treatment recommendations to Al Piercy, RS (704-336-6440).

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